



# Seattle Design Commission

October 6, 2006

Greg Nickels  
*Mayor*

Karen Kiest  
*Chair*

Tasha Atchison

Pam Beyette

Evan Bourquard

Brendan Connolly

John Hoffman

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*Executive Director*

Layne Cubell  
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**Seattle City Council  
Mayor Greg Nickels  
Seattle City Hall  
600 Fourth Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98124**

## **RE: SR-520 Replacement Project City Preferred Alternative**

Honorable Mayor Nickels and City Council Members:

As requested by the City Council at our briefing to the SR-520 Committee of the Whole on August 14th, the Seattle Design Commission has reconsidered the 6-lane Alternatives for the SR-520 Project, including the Pacific Interchange Option.

We feel it is premature to support any 6-lane option at this time. The Commission has conducted a series of reviews of the SR-520 Replacement project in seven courtesy briefings over the past four years and is impressed with how the project has evolved to respond to new ideas and local design concerns. We hope that the City's four representatives on the SR-520 Executive Committee can speak with one voice in advocating for the alternative that best serves the needs of Seattle.

It is clear from the available information that the physical impacts on Seattle of any 6-lane Alternative will be far greater than those of the 4-Lane Alternative. We cannot support the 6-lane options presented as we remain solid in our concerns for:

- impacts on the University of Washington
- impacts on the Arboretum and area wetlands
- impacts to Seattle neighborhoods
- inherent conflicts with Seattle's global reputation as an environmental policy leader

We also feel strongly that new project cost information released last month by WSDOT must now factor into your decision making.

We urge you to keep in mind that the overall goal of the project for the City should be to increase mobility with the least environmental impact possible. While we understand that the WSDOT project team is tasked with looking at previously identified options in its



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DEIS, the best mobility and urban design solutions might be found in a Hybrid Alternative which has yet to be developed that pulls together the fundamental merit of the 4-lane Alternative and the added benefits of the several 6-lane options. Specifically, we recommend the Hybrid Alternative include:

- Dedicated transit ramps at key junctures
- Lids that offer improved surface connections
- Direct intermodal transportation connection at the University
- Aggressive traffic management and congestion pricing tools

We are in the process of reviewing the DEIS and will submit more detailed comments on the urban design elements to WSDOT later this month. In our early review, we have found a primary shortcoming is that the 4-lane Alternative did not consider all amenities to allow for a fair comparison with the 6-lane Options.

Without more compelling arguments, we still find the 4-Lane Alternative to be the most positive option for the City of Seattle. We fully recognize that, as currently conveyed by WSDOT, it does not accommodate dedicated transit. We remain concerned about the cost and long-term impacts of a 6-lane Alternative and do not believe it is the only option for ensuring a commitment to transit. Putting mobility first with environmental concerns in mind is only possible, we believe, in a 4-lane Hybrid Alternative.

WSDOT has started the important early design work and clearly much more work and refinement lies ahead. The City needs a clear, long-range vision for this critical project in order to achieve excellence in design, mobility, transit connectivity and development that fits Seattle's unique urban and environmental context.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Kiest', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Karen Kiest  
Chair

cc: Tim Ceis and Emelie East, Mayor's Office  
Michael Fong and Casey Hanewall, Council Central Staff  
Phyllis Shulman, Council Staff  
Grace Crunican, Bob Powers, Dave Allen, SDOT  
Diane Sugimura and John Rahaim, DPD  
Barb Wilson, Seattle Planning Commission